CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A computer-implemented method for targeting marketing content to an online user, each content having an associated target profile, comprising the steps of:

collecting data describing the user in a user profile, the data including a photographic likeness of the user;

comparing the user profile, including information derived from the user's photographic likeness, to the target profile associated with each content; and

presenting the user with content based on the comparison.

2. The computer-implemented method of Claim 1 further including the step of dynamically creating content for the online user based on the user profile, wherein the dynamically created content includes a portion of the user profile data.

3. The computer-implemented method of Claim 2 wherein the dynamically created content includes the photographic likeness of the user.

4. The computer-implemented method of Claim 3 wherein the photographic likeness is altered to incorporate a portion of the content into the photographic likeness for display to the user.

5. The computer-implemented method of Claim 4 wherein the step of collecting data includes the step of identifying the location of the user's facial features in the photographic likeness.

6. The computer-implemented method of Claim 5 wherein the step of identifying facial features includes identification of the user's eyes, nose, lips, ears and neckline.

7. The computer-implemented method of Claim 5 wherein the step of collecting data further includes the step of identifying facial feature characteristics including skin tone and hair color.

8. The computer-implemented method of Claim 1 wherein the step of collecting data includes the step of tracking the user's browsing habits.

9. The computer-implemented method of Claim 1 wherein the step of collecting data includes the step of receiving the user's response to context-specific survey questions.

10. The computer-implemented method of Claim 7 wherein the photographic likeness is altered to simulate the application of cosmetics on the photographic likeness.

11. The computer-implemented method of Claim 10 wherein the color of the cosmetics is selected based on the identified facial feature characteristics.

12. The computer-implemented method of Claim 5 wherein the photographic likeness is altered to simulate the wearing of jewelry.

13. The computer-implemented method of Claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
     assigning metrics to the collected data; and
     creating a data index for the user based on the assigned metrics, whereby the data index identifies the user's preferences and purchasing habits.

14. The computer-implemented method of Claim 13 further including the step of applying a confidence factor to each metric, the confidence factor causing the metric value to decay over time.

15. A system for targeting marketing content to a plurality of online users comprising:

a data storage including:

a plurality of user profiles, each user profile including data describing a user's demographic and psychographic characteristics and a photographic likeness of the user;

a plurality of online content;

a plurality of target profiles, each target profile having an associated content;

a processor; and

a program memory connected to the processor, the program memory having program instructions stored therein for instructing the processor to perform steps comprising:

comparing a user profile, including information derived from the associated user's photographic likeness, to the target profiles; and

presenting the user with the content associated with the target profiles.

16. The system of Claim 15 wherein the program memory further includes instructions for instructing the processor to perform the step of dynamically creating content for the online user based on the user profile wherein the dynamically created content includes the photographic likeness of the user.

17. The system of Claim 16 wherein the program memory further includes instructions for instructing the processor to perform the step of altering the photographic likeness to incorporate a portion of the content into the photographic likeness for display to the user.

18. The system of Claim 15 wherein the program memory further includes instructions for instructing the processor to perform the step of identifying the location of the user's facial features in the photographic likeness.

19. The system of Claim 18 wherein the photographic likeness is altered to simulate the application of cosmetics on the photographic likeness.

20. The system of Claim 15 wherein the program memory further includes instructions for instructing the processor to perform the steps of:

assigning metrics to the user profile data; and

creating a data index for the user based on the assigned metrics, whereby the data index identifies the user's preferences and purchasing habits.

21. A method for targeting marketing content to a user having an associated user profile, each targeted content having an associated target profile defined by market segmentation variables, comprising the steps of:

assigning metrics to data elements in the user profile, each metric representing either an incremental or decremental change in a market segmentation variable, and including a confidence factor that decays over time;

calculating a user index by applying the assigned metrics to the market segmentation variables;

comparing the user index to the target profile associated with each content; and

presenting the user with content based on the step of comparing.

22. The computer-implemented method of Claim 21 further including the step of dynamically creating content for the online user based on the user profile, wherein the dynamically created content includes a portion of the user profile.

23. The computer-implemented method of Claim 21 wherein the user profile includes a photographic likeness of the user, and wherein the step of assigning metrics includes assigning metrics to information derived from the user's photographic likeness.

24. The computer-implemented method of Claim 23 wherein the photographic likeness is altered to incorporate a portion of the content into the photographic likeness for display to the user.

25. The computer-implemented method of Claim 24 wherein the photographic likeness is altered to simulate the application of cosmetics on the photographic likeness.

26. The computer-implemented method of Claim 24 wherein the photographic likeness is altered to simulate the wearing of clothing.

5   27. A method for targeting marketing content to an online user, each content having an associated target profile including at least one market segmentation variable and each online user having an associated user profile including a plurality of data elements, comprising the steps of:

collecting data describing the user in the user profile, the data including responses to context-sensitive questions;

10   comparing the user profile, including information derived from the context-sensitive questions, to the target profile associated with each content; and

presenting the user with content based on the comparison.

28. The method of Claim 27 further comprising the steps of:

identifying at least one deficient data element from the user profile;

15   identifying content having an associated market segmentation variable that relates to the deficient data element; and

creating a context-sensitive question based on the identified content, wherein the answer to the context-sensitive question is collected in the deficient data element.

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29. The method of Claim 28 further comprising the step of dynamically creating content for the online user based on the user profile, wherein the dynamically created content includes a portion of the user profile.

25   30. The method of Claim 29 wherein the user profile includes a photographic likeness of the user.

31. The method of Claim 30 wherein the photographic likeness is altered to incorporate a portion of the content into the photographic likeness for display to the user.

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32. The method of Claim 31 wherein the photographic likeness is altered to simulate the application of cosmetics on the photographic likeness.